

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 CU-02

ACDA-07 /070 W

-----020958Z 034026 /10

O R 020912Z JUN 77

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5126

INFO CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 6337

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CH

SUBJ: CHINA HIGHLIGHTS, NO. 12

1. MORE FAVORABLE CHINESE COMMENT ON NOTRE DAME SPEECH
IN ONE OF SEVERAL FAVORABLE COMMENTARIES ON THE PRESIDENT'S
NOTRE DAME SPEECH IN THE PAST WEEK, HONG KONG'S PRC-OWNED
"WEN WEI PAO" ON MAY 28 LINKED U.S. FOREIGN POLICY CHANGES
TOWARD CHINA, KOREA, AND VIETNAM WITH A NEW CONFIDENT U.S.
POTURE FREE OF ANY "FEAR OF COMMUNISM". IT ALSO IMPLIED THAT
THE PRC FAVORED A POLICY OF "GRADUAL" U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL
FROM SOUTH KOREA.

2. CONCENTRATION OF PRC OIL DRILLING EQUIPMENT IN SOUTH
CHINA SEA AREA
THE PRC APPEARS TO BE STEPPING UP OIL EXPLORATION EFFORTS IN
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THE CONTROVERSIAL SOUTH CHINA SEA AREA. A REPORTED PEKING
PRESYXDISCLOSURE OF OFFSHORE DRILLING ACTIVITY IN THE AREA,
CARRIED BY WIRE SERVICES, HAS SPARKED CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION
ABOUT CHINESE INTENTIONS. BOTH OF ITS RECENTLY PRUCHASED
SINGAPORE JAK-UP RIGS ARE IN THE AREA -- THE SOUTH SEA I
RELIABLY REPORTED TO BE DRILLING NEAR HAINAN ISLAND AND THE
SOUTH SEA II IN A TEMPORARY ANCHORAGE NEAR HONG KONG. IN

ADDITION, A CATAMARAN-TYPE DEEP WATER DRILLING VESSEL, SIMILAR IN APPEARANCE TO CHINA'S KANTAN I (WHICH HAS BEEN OPERATING IN THE YELLOW SEA) HAS ALSO REPORTEDLY BEEN SEEN IN THE PEARL RIVER ESTUARY. IF THE CATAMARAN SIGHTING IS ACCURATE, IT MARKS A HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF THREE OUT OF CHINA'S FIVE OFFSHORE RIGS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA REGION AND SUGGESTS THE POSSIBILITY OF A SIGNIFICANT FIND OR AT LEAST VERY PROMISING SIGNS OF ONE.

3. CONTINENTAL SHELF PROBLEMS

RECENT MOVES BY JAPAN AND VIETNAM DISREGARDING CHINESE CLAIMS TO THE CONTINENTAL SHELF HAVE HIGHLIGHTED CONFLICTING OFFSHORE INTERESTS. PROSPECTIVE JAPANESE RATIFICATION OF THEIR SHELF AGREEMENT WITH SOUTH KOREA, DESPITE CHINA'S MAY 27 PROTEST THAT IT INFRINGES ON CHINA'S SOVEREIGNTY HAS BEEN MATCHED BY A RECENT VIETNAMESE DECLARATION OF A 200-MILE ECONOMIC ZONE THAT CONFLICTS WITH CHINESE CLAIMS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. THE VIETNAMESE STATEMENT HAS THE APPEARANCE OF A DELIBERATE SLAP AT THE CHINESE. IT COINCIDES WITH INCREASED CHINESE OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING IN THE AREA, WHICH RAISES THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER FRICTION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 02-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977HONGK06337
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770196-0607
Format: TEL
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770699/aaaadilq.tel
Line Count: 84
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4013c486-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2308310
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHINA HIGHLIGHTS, NO. 12
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ENRG, PLOS, CH
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4013c486-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009